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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/154 on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. It updates information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session (A/69/339) and covers the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. The report has been coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and includes information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the International Labour Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. It also includes information drawn from publicly available reports by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

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I. Introduction

1. Over the past year, hundreds of thousands of people on the African continent have fled their homes and sought safety in neighbouring countries and further abroad.[1] While unresolved conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan continued, additional conflict in Burundi and Nigeria further compounded the displacement situation. As at the end of 2014, the number of refugees in sub-Saharan Africa stood at 3.7 million, representing an increase for the fifth consecutive year and some 759,000 more refugees than the year before. There were also more than 11.4 million internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa, representing a third of the global total.[2]

2. Those simultaneous emergencies, both new and protracted, have intensified the burden on host countries and communities and placed unprecedented demands on humanitarian organizations in terms of emergency response capacity. During the reporting period, the humanitarian community confronted two emergencies in Africa for which a level-3 emergency response[3] was activated, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, both of which required the appointment of regional refugee coordinators and additional staff and resources. Other major challenges included the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa and severe flooding in parts of Malawi and Mozambique. Some countries also experienced a resurgence of xenophobia.

3. Nevertheless, the tradition of hospitality in Africa remained strong. Ethiopia kept its borders open to new arrivals, adding to the more than 700,000 refugees already receiving protection on its territory and making it the largest refugee-hosting country in sub-Saharan Africa and the fifth-largest in the world. With more than 551,000 refugees, Kenya was the second-largest refugee-hosting country in sub-Saharan Africa. While the majority of refugees remained in exile, there were several breakthroughs that opened opportunities for durable solutions, including the naturalization of former refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania and local integration in Zambia. Significant efforts were also made to identify and resolve situations of statelessness across the continent.

II. Subregional overviews

A. East Africa, including the Horn of Africa

4. East Africa, including the Horn of Africa, remained the subregion with the largest refugee and internally displaced populations, reaching 2.6 million refugees and 6.5 million internally displaced persons as at the end of 2014. Food insecurity, insufficient land to host the increasing number of refugees, restricted freedom of movement and impediments to humanitarian access were major challenges across the subregion. As at mid-2015, some 315,000 Sudanese refugees continued to live in

[1] The present report is concerned exclusively with sub-Saharan Africa.

[2] See the website of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Available from www.internal-displacement.org.

[3] Level-3 emergencies are defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as major sudden onset humanitarian crises triggered by natural disasters or conflict which require system-wide mobilization.

14 camps in eastern Chad, while the unrest in South Sudan, which necessitated a scaled-up level-3 emergency response, dominated the humanitarian landscape.

South Sudan situation

5. Despite efforts to drive the peace process forward, fighting continued throughout the year, especially in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei States. That resulted in the internal displacement of approximately 1.5 million persons, including more than 166,000 who sought temporary protection near or within United Nations peacekeeping sites. Between December 2013 and June 2015, 639,000 South Sudanese had fled across borders to Ethiopia (223,000), the Sudan (188,000), Uganda (156,000) and Kenya (72,000).

6. Heavy rains and flooding in Ethiopia made many of the camps inhospitable and complicated the logistics of relocating 47,000 refugees to safer grounds in the new Jewi camp by July 2015. In Uganda, South Sudanese refugees continued to be provided plots of land to encourage self-sufficiency. In the Sudan, a memorandum of understanding signed in December 2014 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Commissioner for Refugees and the Directorate of Passports and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior established a framework for the registration of South Sudanese refugees and the issuance of identity cards.

Somali refugee situation

7. Humanitarian organizations gained access to 13 new areas in Somalia, enabling the provision of humanitarian assistance. However, continued insecurity and the absence of rule of law and basic services in some areas continued to discourage refugee returns. The Global Initiative on Somali Refugees provides a framework for identifying solutions for the nearly 1 million Somali refugees in East Africa and the Horn of Africa.

8. The attack at Garissa University in Kenya in April 2015 heightened concerns about national security. UNHCR and the Governments of Kenya and Somalia are working together on several agreed objectives, including enhancing security for the nearly 350,000 refugees in the Dadaab camps; ensuring that returns from Dadaab are voluntary and that they take place in conditions of safety, dignity and sustainability; and expanding the pilot project for voluntary returns within Somalia. A portfolio of cross-border projects is being developed in support of those objectives.

9. Since the beginning of 2015, the conflict in Yemen has forced some 22,000 Yemeni refugees and persons of other nationalities to flee across the Gulf of Aden towards Somalia. An additional 20,000 persons of various nationalities, including 2,000 registered Yemeni refugees, sought safety in Djibouti.

B. Central Africa and the Great Lakes

10. By June 2015, there were over 1.1 million refugees and 3.3 million internally displaced persons in the Central Africa and Great Lakes subregion, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo accounting for the majority of the internally displaced persons.

Burundi emergency

11. In early April 2015, political turmoil and violence erupted in Burundi. Since then, more than 144,000 Burundians have crossed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. UNHCR and its partners launched a regional refugee response plan to protect and assist refugees in the neighbouring countries.

Central African Republic situation

12. In the Central African Republic, the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces in September 2014 brought hope for the stabilization of the security situation. However, continued fighting and human rights abuses targeting civilians resulted in massive displacement and the spillover of violence into Cameroon, Chad, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As at the end of 2014, humanitarian organizations worked to respond to the protection and assistance needs of more than 438,000 internally displaced persons and some 412,000 refugees in the neighbouring countries.

13. Many of the Central African refugees arrived in exile severely malnourished, having walked for weeks to reach safety. Humanitarian agencies coordinated a multisectoral response to the refugee influx, strengthening assistance and enhancing reception conditions for new arrivals. Cameroon hosts the largest number of Central African refugees, approximately 245,000, with most spread across more than 300 sites and villages in the east and Adamaoua regions. The extensive border presented a challenge, with more than 30 entry points and an operational area of some 50,000 square kilometres. The crisis has also forced 91,000 refugees to flee into Chad since December 2013.

14. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons called for the Central African Republic to uphold its obligations under the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and urged that the national reconciliation dialogue be inclusive of the rights of internally displaced persons. The Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in May 2015, and the pact for peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction which it adopted, brought hopes for an end to the conflict and a solution to the humanitarian crisis.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

15. Conflict continued to affect the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the Kivus, Katanga and Ituri provinces. By the end of 2014 there were over 2.7 million persons internally displaced and 358,000 Congolese refugees in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

C. West Africa

16. As at the end of 2014, West Africa hosted some 252,000 refugees and 1.5 million internally displaced persons. The humanitarian situation was dominated by the impact of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, which produced mass displacement and affected security in neighbouring countries. The outbreak of the Ebola virus posed a serious risk to refugees and host populations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra

Leone, and humanitarian organizations worked to prevent infection in refugee camps and ensure that refugees were included in national prevention and preparedness activities.

Mali situation

17. The signing of a peace and reconciliation agreement between armed groups and the Government of Mali in June 2015 opened possibilities for stabilization. However, many challenges lie ahead, including a fragile security situation in northern Mali, which is not yet conducive for organized voluntary return. More than 90,000 people remained internally displaced as at June 2015, including an additional 59,000 displaced by renewed fighting in May. Some 128,000 Malian refugees remained in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger as at the end of 2014.

Nigeria situation

18. Despite some military progress in early 2015 in recapturing territory from Boko Haram control and releasing some hostages, during the entire reporting period the situation in north-eastern Nigeria generally deteriorated. Frequent attacks on civilians and cross-border attacks into Cameroon, Chad and the Niger triggered internal displacement in these countries. As at June 2015, some 1.4 million Nigerians were internally displaced and nearly 168,000 had sought refuge in the three neighbouring countries. In particular, the Niger, which ranks lowest on the human development index, has seen a sharp increase in the refugee population in the country. Over 100,000 Nigerians and citizens of the Niger arrived in the Diffa region seeking protection, and some 50,000 citizens of the Niger were internally displaced in 2015 due to a spillover of the conflict. Cameroon, meanwhile, received nearly 50,000 refugees, and the violence in Nigeria and in the Far North region of Cameroon displaced 82,000 Cameroonians. In addition, some 25,000 people were displaced in Chad (13,000 refugees and 12,000 internally displaced persons) in the context of the violence in north-eastern Nigeria.

D. Southern Africa

19. Southern Africa continued to host some 174,700 refugees as at the end of 2014. Though the situation throughout the subregion remained relatively calm, there were reports of tensions related to the economic crisis in a number of countries. Humanitarian and protection activities focused on awareness-raising to counter xenophobia, redressing statelessness, advocacy related to mixed movements, strengthening national asylum systems and promoting self-reliance. In late 2014 and early 2015, heavy rains caused flooding in southern Africa, mainly in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and affected some 1.82 million people, leaving many internally displaced. Humanitarian agencies delivered food and non-food items to flood victims in Malawi. In January 2015, the World Bank also approved $80 million in credit and loans to help Malawi reconstruct critical public infrastructure, restore agricultural livelihoods, enhance food security and improve disaster response and recovery capacities. In Mozambique, the humanitarian country team assisted the Government in its early recovery efforts.

20. In South Africa, xenophobia and violence against foreigners, including refugees and asylum seekers, resulted in the loss of lives, property damage and

displacement. United Nations agencies and partners worked with the Government and civil society to provide psychosocial support and assistance packages for the displaced, including rental subsidies and food vouchers, establish a 24-hour protection hotline and organize mass information campaigns to promote tolerance.

III. Protection

21. Protection challenges included instances and threats of refoulement by some countries, trafficking, widespread sexual and gender-based violence, the forced recruitment of children and threats to the civilian nature of refugee camps. Disregard for international humanitarian law by parties to conflict was prevalent, compounded by fragmentation among armed groups with unclear chains of command. Humanitarian and human rights actors recorded incidents of extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests and detention. Against that backdrop, the United Nations worked to support Governments in strengthening protection systems and responses.

A. Addressing sexual and gender-based violence and specific needs

22. Refugee and internally displaced women and children were disproportionately affected by mass displacement in areas of conflict. In some areas of South Sudan, the percentage of female-headed households was close to 60, and women and girls faced a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including in sites specifically designated for the protection of civilians. Displacement increased the risk of some harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage, including in the Central African Republic. In the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were continued concerns linked to the heavy presence of armed groups, including incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, women encountered continued discrimination as they sought to access employment, reproductive health care and other services and to ensure a voice in decision-making processes affecting their lives.

23. Protection responses sought to be inclusive of individual differences of age, gender and diversity. In the context of refugee registration, profiling facilitated the identification of individuals with specific needs and vulnerabilities, including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, unaccompanied minors and separated children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Emergency interventions on behalf of women included sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response programmes, the distribution of hygiene kits and the provision of lighting in camps.

24. During the reporting period, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) opened "safe spaces" for displaced women in internally displaced person and refugee settlements in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan and Uganda. Those facilities provided access to essential services and referrals for psychosocial and other survivor-related services and offered a location for women to share their experiences.

25. Conflicts across the region also exacerbated risks for children, including separation from families, physical and psychological harm, forced recruitment and

sexual and gender-based violence. Family tracing and the reunification of unaccompanied and separated children remained a priority in emergencies. In the Central African Republic, some 540 separated children were reunited with their families. In South Sudan, nearly 5,500 children were supported with community-based alternative care and family tracing and reunification.

B. Asylum and migration

26. As mixed flows within Africa continued to rise, most countries demonstrated a firm commitment to the protection of refugees and generally fulfilled their international obligations. Whereas South Africa had been the leading destination country of new asylum seekers worldwide in the period 2008-2012, the number of new asylum claims in the country has declined since then, standing at 71,914 in 2014. Among those a total of 20,405 Zimbabweans applied for refugee status in 2014, compared with 16,420 in 2013. Efforts continued throughout the continent to strengthen national asylum systems. Several States were in the process of drafting or revising national refugee-related laws, and Rwanda adopted strengthened legislation in 2014 that included provisions on non-refoulement and access to economic and social rights. A new asylum act was passed in the Sudan in 2014; however, its provisions maintained restricted freedom of movement for refugees.

27. The African Union continued to support its member States in strengthening responses to transnational organized crime, notably trafficking and smuggling of persons, and in enhancing the protection of victims of trafficking in the Horn of Africa. Following consultations with the Governments of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Sudan, the African Union, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, convened a regional ministerial conference in Khartoum in October 2014 dedicated to human trafficking and smuggling in the Horn of Africa. Ministers from more than 15 countries of origin, transit and destination participated, and adopted a declaration and plan of action encouraging the development of national strategies to address smuggling and human trafficking, greater cooperation across borders and the sharing of best practices. The adoption of a declaration in the context of the European Union-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative in November 2014 was another positive step towards enhanced international cooperation.

28. During the reporting period, tens of thousands of African refugees and asylum seekers sought safety in countries outside their region, travelling as part of mixed movements. During the first six months of 2015, approximately one third of the 89,500 refugees and migrants who arrived by sea to Europe came from the African continent, predominantly from East Africa and the Horn of Africa. There was also an increase in mixed flows from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf of Aden. Nearly 92,000 new arrivals were recorded in 2014, the majority arriving in Yemen during the last five months of the year. Among the new arrivals, 23,000 were identified as refugees and asylum seekers. Over 37,000 persons had similarly crossed as at late May 2015.

C. Statelessness

29. As at June 2015, 22 of the 54 African Union member States were parties to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and 15 were parties to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961. During the reporting period, Guinea acceded to the 1961 Convention, the Niger acceded to the 1954 Convention and the Gambia and Mozambique acceded to both. The Niger reformed its nationality law to ensure gender equality in respect of acquisition, change and retention of nationality. Several additional countries were in the process of reviewing their nationality laws, with a view to removing gender discrimination.

30. An African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights report on the right to nationality was launched in January 2015 in Addis Ababa. In its report, the Commission urged African States to support the Commission's efforts to draft a protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the right to nationality in Africa, in line with resolution 277 adopted during the fifty-fifth ordinary session of the Commission in May 2014.

31. Following an amendment to its nationality law in 2013 that allows long-term residents to acquire nationality through a simple declaration procedure, Côte d'Ivoire continued its progress towards resolving the situation of an estimated 700,000 stateless persons, one of the largest in the world. To support efforts to address statelessness in the West African context, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNHCR organized a regional ministerial conference on statelessness in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in February 2015. The conference saw the adoption of the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness, and several States made additional pledges to address statelessness, including through legal reform, the resolution of existing situations of statelessness and the strengthening of civil registration.

D. Internal displacement

32. December 2014 marked the second anniversary of the entry into force of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). As at June 2015, 40 States were signatories to the Kampala Convention, and 24 had ratified it. United Nations organizations and partners remained engaged with national authorities in their efforts to develop policies and laws on internally displaced persons and implement the Kampala Convention. In particular, Somalia adopted a policy framework on displacement, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo prepared a draft bill on internally displaced persons during the reporting period. Despite those positive steps, much more needs to be done to address the situation of internal displacement on the continent.

IV. Humanitarian response and constraints

A. Delivery of assistance

Education

33. United Nations organizations and partners continued to support education needs, particularly in emergencies, through the establishment of temporary learning spaces, the construction of permanent schools for host and refugee communities alike and the provision of school supplies. Displaced children were integrated into host community schools, where possible, to enhance social cohesion. Common challenges included an insufficient number of teachers, large classes, difficulty with retention and differences in languages of instruction. Those challenges were addressed through community campaigns, capacity-building for teachers and other measures.

34. In Somalia, United Nations partners worked to provide education in key areas of potential return. Meeting the education needs in other conflict-affected countries remained difficult: in South Sudan, an additional 400,000 children dropped out of school, largely in Upper Nile and Unity States, while in the Central African Republic almost 170,000 displaced children did not have access to public schools. Owing to the current crisis in Burundi, some displaced students may not be able to take national exams that are critical to obtaining school-leaving certificates and, therefore, to pursuing further education.

Food and nutrition

35. In 2014, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided food assistance to more than 3 million refugees in 22 countries across sub-Saharan Africa. The vast majority were partially or entirely dependent on external assistance because of limited access to land, employment or other means for ensuring self-sufficiency and food security. Food needs were met through various modalities including direct food assistance or, when possible, through cash or food vouchers. That helped improve dietary diversity and empowered refugees to make their own choices. UNHCR and WFP implemented a regional policy of introducing biometric identification checks in refugee operations. At the same time, United Nations agencies continued to promote refugee self-reliance in protracted situations.

36. A major challenge in addressing growing needs remained the persistent shortfalls in funding. Food assistance was cut by at least 50 per cent for nearly 450,000 refugees in the major emergencies in the Central African Republic, Chad and South Sudan. Another 350,000 refugees, including in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique and Uganda, saw their rations reduced by between 5 and 43 per cent. A media campaign by United Nations agencies drew attention to the impact of the shortages, including negative coping strategies and protection risks.

37. Malnutrition rates among children under 5 years old in most conflict-affected countries rose with the number of emergencies during the year, with global acute malnutrition rates among refugees and internally displaced children often above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent, and severe acute malnutrition in some areas exceeding 4 per cent. Seeking to minimize the potential for tensions, United Nations agencies increased efforts to meet the food and nutrition needs of both refugees and their host communities through better identification, targeting and assessment.

Health

38. Emergency situations during the reporting period saw refugees arriving in countries of asylum in poor health and nutritional status. Consequently, high rates of under-5 mortality were observed in the first weeks of the emergencies. The main causes of mortality were measles, malaria, respiratory diseases and diarrhoea, as well as severe acute malnutrition. Through a multi-sectoral response including public health, nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene, mortality rates were stabilized in the Central African Republic and Nigeria emergencies. Meanwhile, in the United Republic of Tanzania, efforts by the Government and humanitarian agencies resulted in an effective response by mid-2015 to a cholera outbreak in May 2015 among some of the 64,000 Burundians who had fled to the country. The provision of safe water and sanitation and the availability of treatment for cholera at multiple destinations prevented a deadly outbreak from becoming a catastrophe. Nevertheless, more than 4,600 people contracted the disease, leading to the deaths of 31 refugees and 3 nationals.

39. United Nations agencies provided reproductive health services in emergencies, quickly transitioning into more comprehensive programmes in refugee areas, such as for South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia. They continued to work with Governments and partners to deliver new vaccines within expanded programmes for immunizations and specifically improved access to the measles and polio vaccines in refugee emergencies. In 2015, pentavalent and pneumococcal vaccination campaigns were implemented in Ethiopia and South Sudan.

40. Because anaemia remained a serious risk among refugee children and women across Africa, with far-reaching consequences for child development and learning, general health status and vitality, United Nations agencies and partners implemented anaemia reduction projects in a number of countries. Efforts were made to improve infant and young child feeding practices and to reduce non-dietary causes of anaemia, such as malaria. Deworming and improved sanitary conditions have resulted in significant decreases in some places. In refugee camps in Chad, children from 6 months to 2 years of age received a lipid-based nutrient supplement. Since its introduction, and despite drastic reductions in food assistance, anaemia levels have been overall on the decline.

41. Non-communicable diseases have become an increasing public health problem among refugees, with significant implications for the health care services provided. Non-communicable diseases are largely addressed at the secondary or tertiary (specialist) care level and require expensive treatments. During the reporting period, countries were supported with the development of clinical protocols and training to manage non-communicable diseases at the primary health care level. Partners organized programmes, including capacity-building in Burkina Faso and Kenya. In 2014 and in the first half of 2015, screening for pre-cancerous lesions of the cervix was scaled up in 10 countries in Africa, and refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, the Niger, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania were provided with the capacity to offer screening and treatment services for the condition.

HIV and AIDS

42. As at the end of 2014, 25.8 million of the 36.9 million people in the world living with HIV were from sub-Saharan Africa. The region also accounts for almost

70 per cent of global new HIV infections. A recent Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) report[4] indicated that some 1.3 million persons living with HIV may have been affected by humanitarian emergencies in sub-Saharan Africa, and only a very small proportion of them are likely to have had access to life-saving HIV treatment services, which are critical in the aftermath of an emergency.

43. In 2014, United Nations agencies and partners published a set of guidelines for the delivery of antiretroviral therapy for migrants and crisis-affected persons in sub-Saharan Africa. Those updated guidelines specifically included the forcibly displaced, and stressed that displacement must not be used as a basis to deny treatment.

B. Security and access

44. Attacks and threats against humanitarian workers continued, particularly in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. In Somalia alone, there were 75 incidents against aid workers, including 10 deaths and 22 abductions or arrests of humanitarian staff in 2014. During the first quarter of 2015, more than 30 incidents led to the death of 7, the injury of 11 and the arrest or detention of 20 humanitarian staff. Humanitarian access was deliberately restricted, including through the use of road blocks and checkpoints by non-State armed groups and militias in southern and central Somalia. Administrative restrictions, such as the arbitrary taxation of United Nations and other humanitarian organizations by local administrations, also continued.

45. In the Sudan, parties to the conflict continued to deny or restrict access to much of Darfur's East Jebel Marra, as well as to areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. Elsewhere, humanitarian access was impeded or delayed, affecting the movement of international personnel and hindering protection activities. Humanitarian access in South Sudan continued to be constrained owing to insecurity and violence targeting humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets, as well as by Government restrictions on river transport and the denial of flight safety assurances and airport clearances. Other common impediments included fees and taxes, extortion at checkpoints and interference in programme implementation.

46. In the Sahel region, insecurity and the presence of armed groups constrained humanitarian access in many areas. Landmines and unexploded ordnance were a major concern in Nigeria and will be an obstacle to return. In the Diffa, Tahoua and Tillabery regions in the Niger, and in Agadez farther north, United Nations agencies had to rely on military escorts. In Mali, an alarming increase in security incidents significantly impeded the implementation of projects and the delivery of aid, as humanitarian organizations regularly had to suspend their activities and relocate staff.

[4] See UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, "HIV in emergency contexts". Available from www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2015/20150612_UNAIDS_PCB36_15-13.

V. Solutions

Voluntary repatriation

47. The voluntary repatriation of refugees was at its lowest level since the 1980s. While the number of returnees globally fell from 414,000 in 2013 to 126,000 in 2014, the number also dropped in Africa, from 168,000 to 97,000. Insecurity in countries of origin and an absence of socioeconomic support in areas of return contributed significantly to the low rate of repatriation. The lack of political will to resolve the root causes of displacement also continued to be an important factor.

48. The countries in Africa with the largest number of returns in 2014 were: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (25,200); Mali (21,000); Angola (14,300); the Sudan (13,100); Côte d'Ivoire (12,400); and Rwanda (5,800). Including those who returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the Central African Republic and the Congo, the total number of returnees since the repatriation operation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo began in 2012 was more than 120,000. Thousands also returned from Uganda.

49. The planned repatriation of Malian refugees was affected by renewed clashes in 2014 between Government forces and armed groups. Nevertheless, as at January 2015, some returns took place from Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger. Most returned to the south of Mali, in some cases electing to settle in areas other than their regions of origin rather than remain in exile.

50. The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa resulted in the closure of the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire in August 2014 and, consequently, the suspension of the repatriation of Ivorians for the remainder of the year. In March 2015, UNHCR and the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire agreed that they would resume the voluntary repatriation programme, which included health control procedures. As at the time of reporting, the repatriation programme had not yet resumed.

51. A pilot project to support the spontaneous repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya was launched in December 2014 under the auspices of a tripartite agreement between the Governments of Kenya and Somalia and UNHCR.

Local integration

52. While local integration opportunities have been made available to refugees and former refugees in countries of first asylum, including Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, the number of refugees for whom that solution is offered remains limited.

53. Following a 2011 decision by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to provide citizenship to some 200,000 former refugees from Burundi who arrived in 1972, the local integration process found renewed impetus in September 2014, with some 149,000 citizenship certificates having been distributed by the end of May 2015. The Government is currently developing a multi-partner, multi-year local integration strategy as a framework for engaging national and international partners in the development of settlements, which will be critical for the successful integration of the newly naturalized citizens.

54. Plans were under way in Zambia to facilitate the integration of 10,000 former Angolan refugees and approximately 4,000 former Rwandan refugees in a manner that promotes their legal status, socioeconomic empowerment and self-reliance through the issuance of long-term residence permits, country of origin identity documents and passports. In support of solidarity and social cohesion, the provision of land and basic services will also include Zambian host communities.

Resettlement

55. In 2014, UNHCR submitted approximately 34,800 refugees for resettlement, the majority from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (18,800) and Somalia (9,400). That represents a 19 per cent increase in submissions compared with 2013 and a 52 per cent increase since 2012. More than 19,000 African refugees departed for resettlement from Somalia (12,000) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7,000).

Regional initiatives and comprehensive approaches

56. At a ministerial meeting on the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees held in Addis Ababa in August 2014, the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen, along with the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, UNHCR, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the Economic Commission for Africa, adopted the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees. The countries and organizations committed themselves to assuring continued asylum for Somali refugees in host countries, while working to support the creation of conditions that will make safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation both feasible and sustainable.

57. In 2014, decisive steps were taken to conclude the situation for Angolan refugees after 50 years of exile. More than 14,000 former Angolan refugees were repatriated, mostly from the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. The Government of Angola supported the local integration of its citizens abroad by deploying interministerial teams to the host countries and issuing some 1,000 national passports. Host Governments issued residence permits enabling Angolans to remain even after the cessation of their refugee status. Progress in Zambia to provide residence permits is ongoing despite some administrative delays. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some 18,000 residence permits were issued to facilitate local integration, and some 37,000 former Angolan refugees were planned to be repatriated in 2015.

58. The implementation of comprehensive solutions for Rwandan refugees continued. In 2014, 5,800 Rwandans voluntarily returned home, bringing the total number of returns between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2014 to 199,600. Verification exercises for Rwandan refugees took place in 2014, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where biometric registration is ongoing. Pending the results of that exercise, the number of Rwandan refugees stands at 80,000. Enhanced efforts are needed regarding the issuance of national passports and residence permits for Rwandan refugees who wish to integrate locally. A ministerial-level meeting is planned in 2015 to assess the progress made and determine the way forward on the comprehensive solutions strategy.

Self-reliance and livelihood opportunities

59. United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and donor partners increased activities aimed at building the self-reliance of refugees through livelihood opportunities. Enhanced self-reliance has been seen to not only reduce aid dependency but also to contribute to local economies and better prepare refugees for solutions, whatever those solutions may be and whenever opportunities arise. Livelihood opportunities are also vital for protection, as they reduce the risks of economic and sexual exploitation and child labour.

60. A key objective of livelihood programming is to promote the right to work. Many refugees do not have access to safe and legal employment, and even in countries where refugees have a right to work, it remains difficult for them to access employment in practice. Refugees may face discrimination in the labour market or may lack skills needed in the country of asylum. To address that situation, United Nations agencies provided targeted education and vocational training and access to loan schemes. In several countries in Africa, including Burkina Faso and Zambia, the "graduation model" was implemented. Developed by UNHCR, the Trickle Up programme and the BRAC Development Institute, it aims to "graduate" or support people in rural or urban areas to move out of poverty through interventions that include grants, capacity-building and microfinance.

61. The Government of Uganda has made great strides towards sustainable solutions for refugees. Allowing refugees the right to work and freedom of movement, the Government has also paved the way for development actors to address the needs of all those present within its territory, including refugees. In particular, it has ensured that refugees are included in the economic development of nine refugee-hosting districts as well as in the national development plan for 2016-2020. Meanwhile, WFP and UNHCR and partners began implementing joint livelihood programmes to increase self-reliance, focusing on farming as well as other income-generating activities.

62. In the Sudan, the United Nations continued to support sustainable return, reintegration and recovery, including by addressing community security needs. Initiatives were launched in Darfur and in the states that adjoin South Sudan to support livelihoods for displaced and vulnerable populations through tools such as microfinance and by establishing economic enterprises within host communities to regenerate local economies.

63. In the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the "3x6 Approach"[5] of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was piloted in four communities with the aim of creating a conducive environment for reintegration by improving livelihood opportunities and supporting social cohesion. In 2014, a total of 420 men and women benefited from temporary employment opportunities. The pilot included awareness-raising sessions on conflict mitigation, non-violent communication and intercommunity dialogue. Approximately 105,100 people gained improved access to basic social services as a result of that approach. The 3x6 Approach also supported the socioeconomic reintegration of

[5] The 3x6 Approach provides a starting point for sustainable development following conflict. It includes three organizing principles (inclusiveness, ownership and sustainability) and six discrete steps (enrolment, rapid income generation, savings, joint-venturing, investing and expanding markets).

people affected by the conflict in Burundi, where temporary labour-intensive jobs benefited 4,650 returnees who subsequently were able to start economic activities with accumulated savings. A total of 17 markets were built and 42 rural roads rehabilitated in 2014.

Solutions initiatives

64. At the country level, the Solutions Alliance[6] supported the establishment of national groups, two of which are based in Africa in Somalia and Zambia. Following an event on solutions in Copenhagen during the High-level Partnership Forum on Somalia in November 2014 and a technical workshop to define a results plan linked to national development planning, a national Somalia Group was launched in Nairobi in March 2015. The Group will build on the framework of the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees of UNHCR and the work of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat, a coalition of non-governmental organizations promoting durable solutions for Somali internally displaced persons and refugees. In Zambia, the Solutions Alliance National Advisory Group is co-chaired by the Government and includes a wide range of stakeholders. Together, they have developed a common vision on solutions and are working to support local integration efforts.

65. Following the selection of Côte d'Ivoire as a pilot country for the implementation of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee decision on durable solutions taken in 2011, a durable solutions committee finalized a strategy that had been prepared with the support of UNDP and UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government's Ministry of Planning and Development. The strategy includes responses targeted to the needs of returnees, former internally displaced persons, stateless people and host communities, and was informed by profiling conducted by the Nationa! Statistical Institute and the Joint IDP Profiling Service. Once validated by the Steering Committee of the United Nations Development Action Framework, the strategy will be mainstreamed into United Nations support for the national development plan for 2016-2020.

66. UNHCR and the International Trade Centre (ITC) signed a memorandum of understanding in January 2015 with the aim of expanding the inclusion of refugees in trade for development projects. Since then, ITC has been planning refugee-oriented projects with partners in sub-Saharan Africa and has joined the Solutions Alliance's thematic group on engaging the private sector.

VI. Coordination and partnerships

67. The refugee coordination model[7] guides UNHCR coordination for refugee situations. As part of the overall humanitarian response, regional refugee coordinators for the Burundi, Central African Republic, Nigeria and South Sudan refugee situations, as well as for the Great Lakes, led operational planning and

[6] Launched in 2014, the Solutions Alliance is a network of diverse actors representing affected and host States, local authorities, development and humanitarian agencies, international financial institutions, donors, civil society and private sector actors, academics and others. It seeks to promote and enable the transition for displaced people towards increased self-reliance, resilience and sustainable development. See www.solutionsalliance.org.

[7] Available from www.unhcr.org/53679e2c9.html.

resource mobilization and developed regional refugee response plans, which provided a common platform for planning, delivery and fundraising for partners in the refugee response. Overall, four regional refugee response plans were launched for Africa, covering 12 refugee host country operations and bringing together more than 70 partners.

68. An inter-agency mission to Cameroon by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, IOM, UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-UNHCR joint mission to Chad, took place to ensure that coordination arrangements were streamlined and optimized in line with the joint UNHCR-Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs note on mixed situations regarding coordination in practice.[8]

69. Between July 2014 and June 2015, the inter-agency Protection Standby Capacity Project, hosted by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, facilitated the deployment of five Senior Protection Officers to support United Nations efforts in Africa, including bolstering child protection in the Central African Republic.

70. During the reporting period, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated $259.7 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to support life-saving humanitarian activities in 29 African countries. Nearly 60 per cent, or $153.6 million, went to 18 countries with significant numbers of internally displaced persons or refugees. Allocations to displacement-related crises included $128.6 million for new or rapidly deteriorating crises through the Central Emergency Response Fund's rapid response window and $25 million for critically underfunded crises through the underfunded emergency window. Between January 2014 and June 2015, South Sudan received the highest amount ($59 million for internally displaced persons and refugees), followed by Ethiopia ($21 million for South Sudanese refugees). Some 24 per cent of the funding for displacement-related crises was allocated for food assistance ($36.7 million), nearly 14 per cent for activities related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict ($21.1 million), and 11 per cent for multisector refugee assistance ($16.9 million).

71. Between 2014 and the second half of 2015, country-based pooled funds allocated $421 million to support life-saving humanitarian activities in six sub-Saharan countries: the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. Of that total, roughly $222 million, or 53 per cent, was allocated for projects addressing humanitarian needs caused by displacement.

72. The IKEA Foundation, among others, is providing multi-year funding for refugee operations in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. It is the most significant and ambitious financial commitment to a single operation by a private sector partner. In the initial phase from 2012 through 2014, the Foundation's funding provided 46 million euros in life-saving assistance to Somali refugees in key sectors, and a livelihoods programme was established that included small business grants and vocational training. During the period from 2015 to 2017, the Foundation will support efforts to reduce aid dependency and increase self-reliance, responding to the needs of both refugees and the host community.

[8] Available from www.unhcr.org/pages/538dd3da6.html.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

73. Violence and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa resulted in high levels of new forced displacement for a fifth consecutive year. Increased needs due to both new and continuing crises have stretched the response capacity of Governments and humanitarian agencies to their limits. During the reporting period, emergency response and critical life-saving activities remained a priority, while operational approaches were adapted and expanded to meet the most pressing needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. Despite constraints that included underfunding and insecurity, the coordinated development and implementation of response strategies helped to ensure that humanitarian operations were complementary and mutually reinforcing.

74. Owing largely to conflict, meaningful and effective solutions have been elusive for the majority of the displaced. Uprooted people remained vulnerable to significant protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, forced recruitment and other forms of exploitation. While host countries have upheld the long-standing tradition of solidarity that underpins the African Union's strong legal framework for protection, more remains to be done to ensure that national laws and systems deliver effective protection for all persons of concern. Against that backdrop:

(a) I call upon all States to amplify their efforts to foster peace and security in Africa, with a view to preventing conflict and alleviating human suffering. Human rights violations must end, and protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests and detention must cease;

(b) I recall the fundamental obligation of States to respect the principle of asylum, including non-refoulement, and to maintain open borders for those fleeing conflict and persecution. I call upon the international community to support African countries in meeting the challenges and root causes associated with mixed movements, as well as trafficking and smuggling;

(c) All States and non-State actors must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to people in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons, and must respect and protect humanitarian personnel, supplies and facilities, consistent with international humanitarian law. I encourage all African States to sign, ratify and fully implement the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel;

(d) African Union member States that have not yet signed or ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) are urged to do so. States that have ratified the Kampala Convention are encouraged to incorporate it into their domestic law in order to ensure its implementation;

(e) To reach the ambitious but achievable goal of ending statelessness in 10 years, States are encouraged to develop and implement national action plans to address statelessness, including through law reform, accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961, the removal of gender discrimination from nationality laws and strengthened birth and civil registration. African Union member

States are further urged to support the efforts of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to develop a protocol on the right to nationality in Africa and ensure its prompt adoption;

(f) I urge the international community to ensure robust funding and an assured pipeline for critical food and nutrition needs, particularly in emergencies, and to expand livelihood activities to address the food security and nutritional status of refugees and internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa;

(g) To secure the goal of ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030, African States are encouraged to give greater prominence to refugees and internally displaced persons in their national HIV strategic plans to ensure that conflict and forced displacement do not leave even greater numbers of people beyond the effective reach of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services;

(h) I encourage States and humanitarian and development partners to bolster efforts to address protracted situations of displacement and to seek durable solutions, including from the beginning of a crisis. Multi-year strategies for solutions, with clear benchmarks, must be developed to ensure targeted and coordinated action. States are urged to integrate refugees and internally displaced persons into their national development plans and to provide access to livelihood opportunities and the labour market;

(i) States, humanitarian and development actors must ensure the meaningful participation of refugees and internally displaced persons in the programmes and activities that affect them directly, whether related to protection, assistance or solutions. Those populations must not be treated as beneficiaries of assistance, but rather as agents of their own futures.